

**Connecticut Department of Transportation
Bureau of Engineering and Construction**

REPORT OF MEETING

PROJECT NO.: 50-217 **DATE:** July 15, 2013
and August 19, 2013

DESCRIPTION: Fairfield Salt Shed Facility Improvements

TOWN: Fairfield, Connecticut

LOCATION OF MEETING: (7/15): Fairfield Warde High School Media Room
755 Melville Avenue, Fairfield, Connecticut 06430
(8/19): Conference Room 2, Board of Education
501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, Connecticut

SUBJECT OF MEETING: Public Information Meetings

IN ATTENDANCE:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>E-mail</u>
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Merritt Parkway Stakeholders:

Jill Smyth	Executive Director, Merritt Parkway Conservancy	jill@merrittparkway.org
Chris Wigren	Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation	
(August 19 only)		
Peter Viteretto	American Society of Landscape Architects	
(August 19 only)		

Town of Fairfield (Town):

Michael C. Tetreau	First Selectman	FirstSelectmanFFld@town.fairfield.ct.us
(August 19 only)		
Jennifer Carpenter	Deputy Chief of Staff, First Selectman's Office	jcarpenter@town.fairfield.ct.us
Edward Jones	Space Manager,	
(July 15 only)	Conservation Dept.	ejones@town.fairfield.ct.us
William Hurley	Town Engineer	whurley@town.fairfield.ct.us
(July 15 only)		

Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT):

Theodore Nezames	Facilities Design, Principal Eng.	theodore.nezames@ct.gov
Robert Messina	Facilities Design, Proj Mgr.	robert.messina@ct.gov
Svetlana Kaminsky	Facilities Design, Proj Engr.	svetlana.kaminsky@ct.gov
Matthew Easdon	Facilities Design, Civil Designer	matthew.easdon@ct.gov
Susan Fiedler	State Design, Landscape Arch.	susan.fiedler@ct.gov
Phillip J. Zoppi	District 3, Maintenance Manager	phil.zoppi@ct.gov
(August 19 only)		

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Domenic LaRosa (July 15 only)	District 3, Asst. District Engineer	domenic.larosa@ct.gov
Stephen DiGiovanna	District 3 Constr., Supervisor	stephen.digiovanna@ct.gov
Gregory Dorosh (August 19 only)	Enviro. Compl., Principal Eng.	gregory.dorosh@ct.gov
Judith Nemecek (August 19 only)	Enviro. Compl., Superv. Eng.	judith.nemecek@ct.gov

Presentation: A PowerPoint presentation was delivered by Mr. Robert Messina on the design features and Ms. Susan Fiedler on the landscaping features of the proposed rehabilitation. The salt shed site is located at the intersection of the Merritt Parkway Exit 46 on-ramp and Jefferson Street in the Town of Fairfield.

The presentation covered the following items:

Design Features:

- ⇒ The site's background was described and CTDOT's relationship with both the Merritt Parkway Advisory Committee (MPAC) and the Town of Fairfield (Town) was explained. A descriptive overview of the project was given. A timeline of coordination efforts to date was outlined, including meetings with the MPAC and the Town.
- ⇒ The purpose and need for the shed to be located on the present site was explained. The CTDOT noted that the site serves as the end of snowplow runs originating from both the Trumbull and New Canaan maintenance garages on the Merritt Parkway, such that the plow trucks can refill deicing materials at this site for their return run, and to service the State routes in Fairfield. The coverage area was described, which includes the Merritt Parkway and surrounding State routes.
- ⇒ The sites' winter and summer operations were described. CTDOT noted that the project will not result in any change in use of the site or areas served by the site. This project is intended to improve the existing operation and bring it into compliance with environmental regulations. There will be no increase in truck traffic as a result of this project.
- ⇒ It was described that the CTDOT has been upgrading existing salt sheds all over the State in this way with a standard design that was used here.
- ⇒ It was explained that registration under the DEEP General Stormwater Permit for Construction Activities and a demolition permit (to remove the existing shed) would be required for the project.
- ⇒ The design features of both the shed building and site layout were explained. The new building's dimensions (96' long x 45' wide x 35' high) are larger than the existing shed (52' long x 22' wide x 21' high) to allow delivery trucks to dump salt inside the building and to provide an indoor materials mixing area to keep the salt contained. The shed building design provides long term economic advantages as a result of CTDOT's experience constructing similar buildings throughout the state. The site layout is designed to allow the plow trucks to queue in a circle so that they do not have to back up. This improves operations, safety and reduces noise.
- ⇒ It was explained that the site layout was carefully designed so that the shed and operations area will be located approximately equidistant to affected stakeholders. The design also provides the maximum amount of screening possible through the use of berms and landscaping. Berms are provided to screen both the parkway and adjacent residences.

- ⇒ Stormwater treatment was described. The primary method consists of a treatment basin with a forebay. The two secondary methods consist of a hydrodynamic separator and 4 foot deep sumps on the catch basins.

Landscape Features:

- ⇒ The views from various perspectives were described. As noted in the design presentation, the shed and operations area were carefully designed to provide the maximum opportunity for screening for all affected parties.
- ⇒ The primary view from the Merritt Parkway will be from the northbound travel lanes approaching the site. The combination of berming and landscaping will screen the majority of the height of the building. The view will be limited in time by the Easton Street overpass which is just before the off ramp. A rendering of this view was presented. The analysis of the project was done in accordance with National Park Service and State Historic Preservation Office guidelines and is consistent with past coordination on Merritt Parkway projects.
- ⇒ The views from adjacent residences will also be screened using berms and landscaping. It will be possible to break up the view but not totally block it. Sue Fiedler offered to meet with each individual affected resident at their home to determine the critical views (i.e. out certain windows or from a rear deck), which will then guide placement of significant plantings.
- ⇒ It was noted that at first the plantings will be in the 6 to 8 foot tall range, which will eventually grow to full height over the course of years. This size planting has a far greater chance of healthy establishment than larger initial plantings.
- ⇒ Invasive trees/vegetation will be removed in accordance with Merritt Parkway landscaping guidelines to improve the long term functionality, viability and health of the area's vegetation.

Public Comments and Questions: Approximately 10 residents attended the July 15 meeting, and approximately 30 residents attended the August 19 meeting. At each meeting, approximately 10 residents took the opportunity to ask questions or make comments, which are summarized below:

- ⇒ Residents adjacent to the site expressed concerns about the operation moving to the center of the site, which is closer to the residents on Weeping Willow Road than the current operation. CTDOT explained that the winter storm control operation will be improved so that plow trucks do not have to back up or queue around the center of the site, which should reduce noise and exhaust. The summer staging operation will be reduced in size and scope and will be moved further away from residences, with the current staging areas being filled with berming and landscaping to improve screening. CTDOT's landscape designer offered to meet individually with each adjacent or affected property owner to refine the landscape planting plan to screen particular sightlines.
- ⇒ The representative from the Merritt Parkway Conservancy (MPC) indicated that they would provide written comments after the July 15 meeting. At the August 19 meeting, MPC members voiced their concern about the size of the shed building and that the berming and screening itself changes the character of the Parkway environment.
- ⇒ The First Selectman thanked the CTDOT for undertaking this process and for agreeing to hold a second public meeting. Mr. Tetreau asked for a description of the future process after the public meetings. The Department explained that after the comment period ends on September 3, all of the comments will be reviewed and individual concerns addressed by adjusting the design and landscaping plans.

- ⇒ The Town and residents inquired about the maintenance of the newly created landscaped areas. CTDOT explained that the plantings will have a two year warrantee from the construction contractor. After that, it is expected that the designed balance of various sizes and types of native plantings, along with some open areas that can be maintained via periodic mowing will, based on past experience, provide the greatest opportunity for successful long term plantings and screening.
- ⇒ The MPC representative inquired whether the site would be fenced. CTDOT explained that only the very front of the site, across the access drive, will have a short segment of fencing with a gate at the access drive. The remainder of the site will not be fenced.
- ⇒ The Town's representatives and several residents inquired about the height difference between the shed and adjacent residences on Weeping Willow Lane and the type of trees to be planted to screen the site. CTDOT's designer explained that the shed's overall dimensions, including height, are controlled by the need to deliver salt from an outside vendor via a 53' long bed dump truck inside the shed. The site has been designed to the lowest elevation possible, while allowing the site drainage and stormwater treatment to function hydraulically. CTDOT's landscape designer explained that the plantings, combined with the berm, will initially screen most of the shed and all of the site, and that as the plantings grow taller, they will screen much more of it. It was reiterated that the ideal height for initial plantings is in the 6 to 8 foot range, which will increase their long-term health and survivability rate.
- ⇒ Several residents are concerned that Jefferson Street would not handle the increased traffic from the larger shed. CTDOT responded that there would be no winter operational change, thus no increase in truck traffic and that the summer operations would in fact be decreased.
- ⇒ The MPC inquired if CTDOT could specify in their salt procurement contract that smaller trucks be used to deliver to this site so a smaller shed could be built. Based on subsequent internal CTDOT coordination, it was determined that this is not possible due to the bulk nature of the purchase and the logistics of the vendor's truck loading operations at the distribution facilities.
- ⇒ Residents inquired about the possibility of alternate locations. CTDOT explained that this facility must be located on the Merritt Parkway and thus the only other possible sites that could even be considered are Exits 44 and 42 to the west. However, these sites do not have a suitable location equivalent in land area to the current location. Both of these exits are surrounded by predominantly residential areas. Any possible location would have less area for screening from the Parkway and local residents. There are also watercourses running through these interchanges with probable significant wetland impacts. It was noted that this site at Exit 46 has been used as a winter storm operations site since this segment of the Parkway opened in the early 1940's. It is CTDOT's policy to keep operations at their existing sites to the extent possible, which is generally endorsed by Environmental guidelines and regulations.
- ⇒ Several residents requested to review the engineering plans. CTDOT's facilities design engineers offered to e-mail pdf's to the Town and any residents who furnish their e-mail addresses. Multiple sets of paper prints of the plans will also be provided to the Town for those residents who do not have e-mail. These were provided in the days following the July 15 meeting. Updated plans will be provided following the August 19 meeting.
- ⇒ Several residents at the July 15 meeting felt that the public involvement phase was too short, given the comment deadline of July 29, 2013. CTDOT responded that the notices were placed in local newspapers two weeks prior to the meeting and was posted on the CTDOT's website in accordance with the CTDOT's Public Involvement Manual. CTDOT subsequently decided to hold a second Public Information meeting on August 19, 2013 and extended the comment period for both meetings to September 3, 2013.

- ⇒ Several residents questioned if the lighting will be screened by the berms and landscaping. The lighting will be “dark sky compliant”, which means the lights will point downward to light only the areas needed so that light does not stray from the site. The berms will screen the headlights of plow trucks using the winter operations area. The engineering plans furnished include the lighting plans. A representative of CTDOT’s Electrical design unit can be made available to explain the lighting plan to residents.
- ⇒ Many residents are concerned about the motorcycle training that occurs on weekends at the commuter parking lot. Although this is not affected by this project, CTDOT is providing the residents with the contact person’s name at the CTDOT who permits this program (Connecticut Rider Education Program or ConnREP):

Joseph T. Cristalli Jr.
Transportation Principal Safety Program Coordinator
Highway Safety Office
Bureau of Policy and Planning
Connecticut Department of Transportation
2800 Berlin Turnpike
P.O. Box 317546
Newington, CT 06131-7546
(860) 594-2412
Joseph.Cristalli@ct.gov

Adjournment: A sign-in sheet was provided for any residents wishing to receive more information. CTDOT’s design and landscape contacts are contained in the handouts. It was stated that CTDOT will review the comments from the meetings, along with any additional comments submitted in writing or by e-mail before the comment period ends on September 3, 2013 and coordinate further with Town officials, the MPAC and affected residents to improve the design.

The question and answer session was concluded at approximately 8:00 p.m. on July 15, 2013 and 9:00 p.m. on August 19, 2013. CTDOT representatives then continued to speak with residents informally until approximately 8:45 p.m. on July 15, 2013 and 9:45 p.m. on August 19, 2013.